

# News from Ed Markey

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**Massachusetts Seventh District**

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## **MARKEY: PRESIDENT'S BUDGET FAILS THE GREATEST GENERATION**

### ***Budget Plan to Privatize Medicare a Bad Experiment***

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** — Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA), a senior member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which has jurisdiction over Medicare, released the following statement on the President's budget announcement:

"While the President's budget is deficient in several fundamental ways, I am especially concerned that the President would privatize Medicare by trying to blackmail patients into abandoning Medicare in favor of an HMO. Massachusetts is already suffering from the chaos, confusion and unaccountability of Medicare+Choice. This is not an "experiment" that needs to be given a chance -- this is a failure that needs to be shown the door.

"We are talking about the Greatest Generation who answered the call to serve our country time and time again. Yet we insist on treating them like the Expendable Generation, but cutting critical health care coverage that will mean the difference to each and every one of them.

"In Massachusetts 225,000 seniors (approx 1 in 4) are enrolled in a Medicare HMO. Many of these Medicare HMO plans no longer are available in certain areas and have left their beneficiaries shuffling for other medical coverage in which they may lose prescription drug coverage, may have to change doctors, or they might have to travel much greater distances to receive medical treatment.

"My constituents in Everett, Revere, and Winthrop lost their Medicare HMO under Medicare + Choice when the plan withdrew from all these areas because it could not maintain physician networks. These are working class towns where seniors on fixed incomes were left struggling to find new medical coverage and wondering how they could suddenly lose coverage over-night while their neighboring community did not. A health care system cannot ignore the medical needs of lower income communities—but that is exactly what will happen under the Bush plan to privatize Medicare.

"In Framingham, over 2,500 seniors lost their Medicare HMO provider when one of the health centers had to withdraw because they financially could not make this plan work. Many seniors this brutally cold winter will have to travel **much** further to see a provider who is part of a Medicare HMO to maintain their coverage. Some seniors will not even be able to travel to another Medicare HMO provider and will have to switch to traditional fee-for-service but will lose their prescription drug benefits. These seniors are not eligible for the state's prescription drug program now and will be left for months without coverage. Our seniors need dependable health care coverage and a privatized system will not provide that."

"In short, the use of the word "choice", both in the crumbling "Medicare + Choice" program and in the President's latest effort to expand on this failed experiment, is a cruel rhetorical trick designed to manufacture support for a program that Congress should reject. Supplementing the existing Medicare program with an adequate prescription drug plan remains the only sure way forward. It preserves patient choice while adapting the program to the reality of the modern practice of medicine."

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